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/For a cultural summary of the Miao of Kweichow, see 1: Stanford University, AF16 Southwest China, category 116, pp. 82-84/

113, 592, 131, 563, 105 Miao AE5

[For information pertaining to the household size, distribution, and tribal subdivisions of the Miao, see 2: Wiens AF17 South China, category 116, Pp. 282-284, 286-287. For a cultural summary of the Miao, see ibid., category 116, Pp. 51, 318. --Analyst]

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1: Yang, Beh & Morse D-5 (1936-1937) 1938
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Some Ch'uan Miao Characteristics.—The Ch'uan Miao are a very isolated, segregated, financially poor group of people almost certainly with no European contacts. They live in the mountains at an elevation of about 3,000 feet. They are mainly an agricultural people, although they are also pastoral and some are hunters. They travel entirely on foot. Their crops are mainly maize and rice. They eat very little meat (mostly mutton) and few vegetables; their chief diet is maize and/or rice.

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The Ch'uan Miao have been permeated very considerably by the culture of the Chinese and the grade of that culture is not low. Given equal advantages the Miao are as intellectual as the Chinese. Some students, under great handicaps, have persevered and graduated from our University.

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They have a distinct unwritten language, which differs markedly from the Chinese. Many of the males are bilingual. Their folklore, songs and music are distinct from those of the Chinese. They have a peculiar bamboo wind-instrument; it consists of a body of a bamboo tube 6–8 inches long by 3 inches in diameter. To the centre of

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[P. 67a]

12: Wu and Ch'en--74 E-5 (1939-41) 1942 AE5 Miao AE5

[132 cont.]

443 Even today they do not have a single market fair within the area and this shows how circumscribed is the sphere of their economic activity. Their only means of livelihood is agriculture. Almost 243 all the fields are terraced according to natural topography, rising from the bottom of the slope to the top in several hundred layers. The shape of the field is long and narrow, producing rice, wheat, corn and barley. These terraced fields are not fertile [242] and the Sheng Miao do not know how to apply fertilizer. Further- [132] more, the temperature in the whole area is very low, and a plentiful harvest is not possible. The proverb says that "when the soil is barren, the people must be poor." Although the 511 Sheng Miao toil all year round in the hard struggle for survival, they can only eke out a bare existence. Being in direct contact with them, the writer could watch at close quarters their extremely miserable conditions, which are pitiable indeed. Because of their ignorance they do not know how to save or to improve the method of production. In case of famine they cannot escape starvation, [133] which is the most important reason for the decrease in their population.

• 105 In our study of the Miao culture we find it varies with different ethnic units and localities, each having its peculiar traits. The distinguishing features of the Sheng Miao, who differ a great deal from the other tribes, are as follows:

1. Ignorant and straightforward, they are easily duped. They are ready to proclaim themselves "kings" and to create disturbances.

2. The men are black in complexion, red-eyed, dishevelled, and tall and big in stature.

3. Up to this day not a single one of them can talk fluent Chinese.

4. There are peculiar styles of costumes for men and women.

5. Their staple food is glutinous rice, supplemented by raw meat, raw blood, bees, locusts, centipedes, earthworms, tree worms, sand worms, water worms, mountain rats and lizards.

6. The women are fond of smoking leaf tobacco.

[133 cont.]

105 7. In marriage cattle are used as betrothal gifts. Men may have two or three wives.

8. According to their customs marriage between cousins is a matter of course.

9. Their men and women are used to premarital affairs.

10. When a woman dies after marriage her parents are entitled to "bone money" from her husband.

11. The aged are weary of life and willing to be buried alive. This is in line with the ancient story of taking one's life on completing the cycle of sixty years.

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12. They still have a "black-ear" slave system.

13. Every village has a village head, and in case of urgent events announcements are made by sending out wooden tablets.

14. Huan-ku-chang [lit., to settle an old account] is an important festival occasion, celebrated with beef or pork.

15. There is current a story of "the changed woman."

2. Three Versions of Their Ancestral Myth

121 773 What was the origin of the ancestors of man? Every ethnic group has its own hereditary myth, which in modern mythology is known as the ancestral myth. The ancestral myth of whatever group is always an account of inconceivable miraculous events, from which, however, we can have a glimpse into the infantile psychology and the living condition of the primitive people as well as their conceptions of the universe, creation, and ancestors. Therefore, when an ethnologist is lucky enough to acquire the ancestral myth of an ethnic group he has a very valuable material in his possession. When 773 the present writer went to the Sheng Miao area at Hsia-chiang to make a systematic investigation he gathered a great deal of material worthy of study especially the original regarding their ancestors. The Sheng Miao are the most primitive among

T 563 clear by us in the population map (Plate 12, Map 6). Here we are now concerned with discussing way of life among these mountain peoples, in a more detailed fashion, insofar as the scanty literature on the subject and the brief visits that the author was able to pay their villages will permit.

a. The Southern Chinese Mountain Peoples

T 563 M Y 105 We call the Miao and the Yao southern Chinese mountain peoples according to their provenience from the south of China, where they are still found in great numbers south of the Yangtze River in the mountains. By way of bodily type both are very close to the Chinese. The Mongoloid physical peculiarities, especially the Mongolian eye, have developed in a very characteristic fashion among them. They mostly have slender figures which, to be sure, are much more reminiscent of the graceful Southern Chinese in their proportions than the tall and mostly somewhat heavy-boned Northern Chinese. The mountain peoples of southern China have after all probably become racially mixed with the southern Chinese population, just like the Thai who are also still found in groups interspersed among the population of the Chinese South.

T 563 M 105 Of the southern Chinese mountain peoples we know the most about the Miao, who call themselves 'Mong' and have only been called "cats" (Miao) by the Chinese. Numerically, they occupy by far the first place among the mountain peoples of Siam. Savina (1),

1. F. M. Savina, Histoire des Miao [History of the Miao] (Hongkong, 1924).

who lived for years among them as a missionary and was able to use their language as well as being able to take down their traditions, has presented us with a valuable description of their life. Even though his experiences were obtained outside the boundaries of Siam, in the highland regions of French Laos and Tonkin, it is nevertheless also possible to apply them to the Siamese Miao according [167] to my observations.

21: Credner--290 K-5 (1927-1929) 1935 AO1 Thailand AO1
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The Miao of Siam are the southernmost offshoots of this people which inhabits the highland regions of eastern Yünnan, of Kweichow, Kwangsi, and finally the northern sections of French Indochina. Everywhere they settle in the high parts of the mountains, genuine mountain people faithful to the proverb: To the fish the water, to the birds the air, to the Miao the mountains.

Only in most recent times, in the course of the last half-century, have they moved into the highland regions of northern Siam, as we have shown above. It is very difficult to determine to what extent this most recent southward migration is a natural one, in accordance with the general migratory tendency of these peoples; to what extent, on the other hand, political changes induced them to migrate as for instance France taking possession of Tonkin and Laos, or economic forces, as for instance, the increase of the Chinese population in Siam and the government opium monopoly, through which the market conditions for this important product were improved.

In any case, this most recent step of immigration is in the same direction as, and accords with, the extensive re-locations that this tribe has behind it, of which its own traditions have created the most vivid images. When the Miao sit around their hearth fire in the evening, visited, perhaps, by the Miao traders that migrate with their wares from mountain to mountain, or on the evening of New Year's day, at a wedding celebration or festival in commemoration of the dead, then they sing their old tribal songs which treat of the origin of the human race, of the scattering of the peoples, and, above all, of the migrations of the Miao. In this tradition, which is still alive today among all the Miao from Sechuan to Siam, even though always in somewhat altered form, it is stated that after the breaking up of the languages and the scattering of the peoples, the Miao first of all came to a high plateau district, and subsequently to a region high in the north covered with ice and snow. Day and night they stayed here for six months. There had been only few and very small trees there. Even the people there were small and had worn hides as clothing. Thence they came, so state the legends, to northern China and in constant battle with the Chinese they migrated southward step by step.

Certainly one cannot interpret this tradition simply as the actual course of the migrations, and, as Savina would like to do, attempt to establish cartographically the routes of migration which he has proceeding

21: Credner--291 K-5 (1927-1929) 1935 AO1 Thailand AO1
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from the Near East through Turkestan to Siberia. Yet it is nonetheless true that in the oral transmission of these migration myths handed down from generation to generation the direction of these migrations, which in essence went from north to south, is clearly expressed.

The extensive distribution of the Miao has lead to their splitting up into different tribes distinguished from each other in language, clothing, and customs. Mostly they have their own chieftains, without being simultaneously organized in any way along the lines of a civil state. The members of these tribes, who, are designated as white, red, flowery and black Miao depending in each case upon special characteristics of their clothing, often live scattered far apart from each other, and all of them, individually, live in constant friction with the peoples of the plains in whose mountains they have settled. No continuous territory exists [168] for them. In this way, the loose tribal organization seems to be more of a relic from times of migration when the living conditions of the people were still different.

The direction of the migration from north to south is also reflected in the Miao's economy, especially in the plants cultivated peculiar to them. They cultivate both plants of the temperate zone, and bring them far south in their mountain heights, as well as plants of the tropics which they have taken up as new into their plant stock in the course of their migration. In Yünnan they cultivate millet, buckwheat, wheat, and American maize, while rice is much less important. The Miao I encountered confined themselves exclusively to cultivating rice, and in addition had only kept a little maize. The rice that they cultivate is not, however, the glutinous rice of the Lao and the forest hoe-culture peoples that emits a glassy substance, but white rice that they have brought with them from the north out of the Chinese cultural area.

It is not an easy matter to arrange the Miao's form of economy systematically. Wherever I met Miao in the north of Siam, they were genuine hoe farmers, that is to say, they cultivate mountain rice along gentle slopes while employing hoe and digging stick. In no case did I meet irrigated rice paddies for which it would have been necessary to use buffalo or cow as plow animal in order to work them. In no case did I observe artificial terracing along the slopes as is necessary

21: Credner--292 K-5 (1927-1929) 1935 AO1 Thailand AO1
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for installing irrigated rice paddies. At the same time in most instances they possess the large domestic animals, buffalos, cattle, and horses. Of these, the latter are kept for riding and pack animals, while the cattle and buffaloes are kept merely as pasture animals sold to the plow farmers of the plains. On the plateau of Tranin in French Laos, situated below the same degree of latitude, according to Savina it seems that the Miao also practice plow agriculture with irrigated rice. Thus the absence of this form of cultivation in Siam perhaps depends on the lack of such extensive, high, level areas as are found in the cordillera of Annam in the plateaus.

The hoe culture of the Miao in Siam, which is geared almost exclusively to mountain rice, would then, first be a function of the southerly location of their habitat, so that rice is the most suitable for plant cultivation. Secondly, it is a function of the relief which, because of mature dissection, does not offer any sufficiently extensive, high-lying, level areas for constructing irrigable paddies. In addition to food plants, the Miao also cultivate poppies. From the seed capsules they extract opium sap partly for their own requirements, and partly for smuggling to the public market. As an article of contraband the intoxicant poison extracted, a black, sticky mass, finds secret buyers on the markets in the Chinese.

The settlements of the Miao throughout are small villages with five to six households. Very seldom does the number reach 15 households. This is connected with the fact that in the highland mountain regions mostly only small areas are available for habitation and, on the other hand, it is connected with the comparatively great need of each individual household for space. The latter requires cleared areas to meet its needs for food and pasturage for the animals.

Although the Miao are cattle breeders, meat plays only a very small role in their nourishment. Of the large number of swine that one sees rooting about near each of the houses, only one is fattened as a pig for slaughter. [Opposite pp.168 and 169, Plate 14. Illustrations 23, 24, 25 and 26]

[169] While the animals are ordinarily in the habit of finding their food themselves and receive food prepared for them on the hearth fire only once, in the evening, the pig for slaughter is tended with great love. All refuse from the meals are given to it, and during the cold season of the year, while the other swine are freezing outside

21: Credner K-5 (1927-1929) 1935 AOl Thailand AOl
(p. 292a) Miao AE5

[opp. p. 168] Plate 14

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Abb. 23. Northern Siam. Miao Girls on the Way to the Forest. The Miao belong to the southern Chinese mountain peoples. Coats and jackets are indigo blue with colorful, partly embroidered, ornamentation. Silver bands are used as neck ornaments. Artistic headgear. Ban Miao (about 1,200 meters) in the highland region of the Doi Pulangka, east of Muang Poa. Photo.: W. Credner, Feb. 16, 1928.

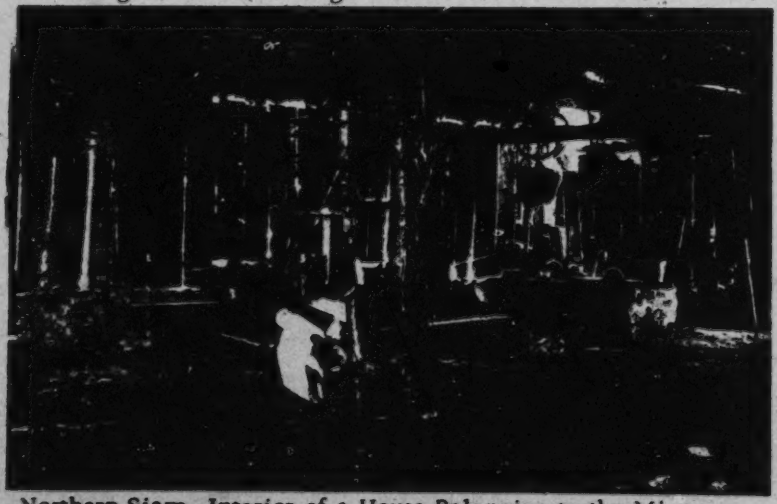

Abb. 24. Northern Siam. Interior of a House Belonging to the Miao. High hearth, table and benches have been brought with them as a Chinese cultural heritage. In the foreground is the simple loom for weaving. Ban Nam Loa (about 1,100 meters) in the highland region of the Doi Puka west of Bo Klua. Photograph: W. Credner, February 14, 1928.

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in their sties, the pig for slaughter is permitted to make itself comfortable underneath the large hearth-stove in the living room. The Miao also like to keep the young pigs here in the living room, especially during the night, because they are safer inside the house from predatory animals that roam during the night. Buffaloes and cattle live in the open pasture in the wilderness of the mountain forest. No one looks after them, only from time to time do they come to the houses in order to satisfy their need for salt. They are also lured into the village by means of salt whenever the question of picking out animals to be brought to the market comes up. In the market places the people of the plains gladly purchase the powerful animals that have grown up in the open mountain air. At most the Miao slaughter animals that have lost their value due to sickness or accidents. In this way, rice and maize constitute the most important food plants, and in order to meet the household's requirements in these articles, it is necessary here too among the mountain peoples to shift the usually very steep paddies frequently, that are exposed to rain wash. The great extension of the area required for living by the individual family depends on this form of hoe culture with temporary cleared spaces. Frequently this area for habitation extends even from one summit region to a neighboring one, so that sometimes in order to reach the remotest digging fields, it is necessary first to descend down deep into the valleys and then go up again, that is to say, to march for many hours. In laboring at clearing and tilling the fields, the men frequently stay away from the village for weeks on end and live in temporary huts in the fields, where they must be supplied with new provisions from the village, from time to time.

The village settlements themselves usually present a rather neglected aspect, and during the rainy season the irregularly scattered houses can only be reached by jumping from rock to rock, since the ground is so muddy, rooted up by pigs and chickens. The houses stand on level soil and are thus distinguished from all other house types occurring in Siam. The foundation is only roughly levelled, and the walls have been built on the lower structure consisting of field rocks or tree trunks. The walls consist of pine trunks split lengthwise and rammed into the ground. Pine rafters or bamboo rods form the framework of the roof, covered with shingles or rice straw. Two doors lead into the house, one of them, the main entrance, located along the cross wall, the second, which is smaller, serves as a side entrance in

21: Credner--294 K-5 (1927-1929) 1935 AO1 Thailand AO1
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the gable end. Usually the house has only one main room and an adjoining bedroom. Sometimes a special kitchen area has also been separated off crosswise. In a corner the tall hearth is found with the large oval, iron cooking bowl which has been firmly embedded in the wall. In the main room, mostly on level ground, on the stamped earth floor, a second fireplace is found which forms the center of the family life during the cool season and in the evening. A table and a few benches, Chinese cultural heritages, are always present (Plate 14, Illustration 24). There are no windows. Light penetrates through the crevices between the boards of the walls, through which heat and cold, wind and moisture also find access. All kinds of utensils lie and stand on the floor and hang [170] from the walls in a confused tangle. These include field tools, traps used in hunting, pack saddles for the horses. On one of the poles that prop up the roof, in the middle of the room, the simple weaving loom has been installed. Ears of corn, the seed for the following year, hang down from the ceiling, and rice is stored in baskets and back-baskets, as well as roots of the forest and, above all, the valuable salt.

Stables are provided only for riding horses, the main possession and pride of each Miao. He devotes his entire love to it, and his first trip in the morning is to his pony to which he throws hay and in whose crib he pours maize, while the pack horses on the other hand, are forced to seek their own food outside in the forest. A roofed-over crude lattice for the swine, firmly joined at night as a protection against predatory animals, the tiger and the leopard, completes the farmyard which is situated on the forest clearing without any kind of fencing around it.

From these farmsteads the men and the women go out to work while the children, usually naked or clothed with a few rags, play in front of the house with dogs, chickens and swine. In tilling the fields and during the harvest, the children share the work with the women. Cultivation and processing of the main textile plant, hemp, is entirely in the hands of the women. They produce crude materials for clothing at the loom, which they are able to adorn with beautiful embroidery. Three Miao girls who are on their way to get food from the forest for the pigs are shown in Plate 14, Illustration 23. The clothing is adapted to the temperatures of the mountain altitudes, and the headgear permits one to recognize quite a high development of

21: Credner--295 K-5 (1927-1929) 1935 AO1 Thailand AO1
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culture in the clothing. The technique of braiding is likewise highly developed, and it serves for the production of the many different baskets and back-baskets, as well as carrying baskets for the pack saddles. Men usually do this braiding. The men are the only ones who go down to the markets, usually just once a year, in order to exchange their own products, skins of cattle and buffalos, the horns of these animals, and stags' antlers, drugs and medicinal plants and last, but not least, the smuggled opium, for the most important article that they require from the outside, salt.

The path to the market, often over 100 kilometers in distance, brings annual change into the life of the highland inhabitants. But they only stay in the fever-infested lowlands for a short period of time, as brief as they can possibly make it. Once exchange and trade have been brought to a conclusion, they hurriedly go back up to the uplands with the resounding ring of the bells that adorn their pack and riding saddles.

These mountain peoples are also temporary guests in their own areas of habitation. No sense of homeland ties them to the highland region in which they have been born. As soon as another mountain peak seems to promise better harvests, they have no qualms about moving. Savina, a man profoundly acquainted with the life of the Miao, describes such a migration (1). Long before the migration

1. F. M. Savina, Histoire des Miao [History of the Miao] (Hongkong, 1924), pp. 182 ff.

gets under way, they have carried out the tasks of clearing and tilling the fields as much as possible in the new area. After they have tied together their few bundles, they set out one day at dawn. The house, the graves of the members of the family, are left behind. Without so much as casting a backward glance, without any sign of attachment, or of regretful departure, the crowd sets out on its way. At the head is the leader of the family with [171] a heavily burdened back-basket. From time to time he drops a handful of rice so that the swine will follow close by him. Then come the buffaloes and cows, driven on by the women and children who are all loaded to the limit of their capacity. The pack animals have hurried ahead in a long caravan--

T 563 M 105 since, after all, several households usually move together--with the young people in order to prepare the camp for the night. In this way they proceed like nomads, full of hope for the new place of settlement, without any strong ties to the place which for many years was their homeland.

Just as though there remained in them still some remnant of nomadic life far back in time, they also differ from the other hoe-culture peoples known to us in their religious concepts. The basic traits of their world of religious conception include not an abundant belief in spirits as among the last-named peoples, but rather, if Savina gives a correct picture (1), clearly monotheism,

1. Ibid., pp. 249 ff.

the belief in one God, who is the creator of the world and their life, the belief in man's immortal soul and the soul's continued existence after death. These mountain peoples of Indochina, who have so far been little explored, thus present an abundance of unsolved, cultural historical and ethnological psychological problems in their ways of life, their religion and mythology.

T 563 Y 105 The Yao, the second of the southern Chinese mountain peoples, are extraordinarily similar to the Miao in physical characteristics and in cultural picture. Their habitats in southern China frequently extend eastward beyond those of the Miao. There they extend all the way into the highland regions of Kiangsi and Fukien, of Kwangsi and Kwangtung, and like those of the Miao, also into Tonkin. From this region they moved into the mountains of Siam in most recent times. Their language diverges from that of the Miao and, like the latter, has not been clearly fitted into the system of Asian languages, so far. Their form of life, however, is exactly the same as that of the Miao. On Siamese soil they have come to resemble each other so much that there they are able to live next to each other in one and the same settlement. Indeed, in one case I was even able to establish the fact that a Yao had married into a Miao family, probably a rare instance, since the Miao are ordinarily endogamous in their own tribes.

23: Graham G-3 (ca. 1900-1920)1924 AO1 Thailand AO1
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to a mutual understanding, based upon practical experiment, before the arrangement of the marriage is published. As in other tribes practising ante-nuptial free love, infidelity after marriage is almost unknown. The Kaché have little or no knowledge of medicine; the properties of a few herbs are known and these are used for certain maladies, but the usual treatment for any sort of disease is the exorcising of the evil spirits causing sickness, by sacrifice and by blowing, whistling, singing, dancing and other incantations, variations of which are common throughout Further India. The dead are always buried, usually in the jungle at the edge of the village clearings. Burial ceremonies are of the most primitive, cleansing the body of evil spirits and eating and drinking heavily in its honour being the principal observances. All the Kaché clans practise agriculture in temporary clearings made on the forest-clad mountain slopes. Here they grow rice, maize, millet, a little tobacco and other produce, but chiefly rice, planting a clearing once or sometimes twice and then making another. They are skilful fishermen and trappers of game.

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The Chong are a small and scattered tribe inhabiting the mountain range north of the Chantabun province. They are in an exceedingly primitive condition, have no settled habitations and subsist chiefly by the collecting of jungle produce such as resin, beeswax, wood-oil and rattan, which they barter with the Siamese for food-stuffs. Their customs, beliefs and language have much in common with those of the Kaché, and though some writers have sought to class them with the Negritos, they are more probably of Môn-Annam stock.

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Tibeto Burman.

Meao. The first impression on encountering the Meao is that here is something different from the usual hillman of Further India. Instead of the almost naked

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23: Graham G-3 (ca. 1900-1920)1924 AO1 Thailand AO1
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M 105 men and the generally dirty and sparsely-clad women, to whose frowsy appearance and unwashed Mongoloid faces the traveller in this part of the world has grown accustomed, there appears a neat and sturdy people, in whose features the Mongolian type is slightly modified, of a bright, cleanly and intelligent appearance, and of industrious habits. They are divided into eleven, some say twelve, clans the majority of which are not, however, represented in Siam, and from long contact have acquired many points of resemblance with the Chinese of Yunnan, the most remarkable of which are their language and the abbreviated pigtails and the costume of the men. The dress of the women varies greatly in the different clans, and borrows nothing from the Chinese. The men wear loose trousers and short coat, a waist-band, sometimes with embroidered tassels, and a large blue turban occasionally replaced by a Chinese cap fitting close to the head. All carry an embroidered bag which serves as a capacious pocket, and many go armed with a dah, or sword, and a cross-bow. The women of the clans found in Siam wear a pleated skirt descending below the knees, and a cross-over coat embroidered at the edges, with sleeves down to the wrist. They also wear a many-coloured turban and sometimes swathe their legs in strips of cloth as a protection against thorns. The women wear their hair in a top-knot which, however, is usually concealed by the turban. McCarthy records that in one of the clans the coiffure of the ladies is an elaborate affair kept in position with beeswax and so constructed as to last for several years without remaking. They have very little jewellery but both sexes often wear a silver torque, to which a pendant inscribed with Chinese characters is sometimes attached.

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T 54.3 167 With the advance of the French across the Mehkông Siam has lost the greater part of her Meao subjects, but a certain number of villages are to be found in the province of Nan and in other parts of Northern Siam,

22: Graham G-3 (ca. 1900-1920)1924 AC* Thailand AC1
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and as the long-prevailing southward and westward movement of the various clans of this people still continues, more communities are continually being established within the present Siamese border.

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The Meao live in strongly-built houses with timber or mud walls and stone floors, generally perched on or near the crest of the highest available mountains. They use a rough bedstead, stools and tables, all of which are conspicuously absent from the houses of the Kaché. Their agriculture is carried on in forest clearings on the sides of the mountains on which they have their settlements, and they grow rice, maize, tobacco, hemp, vegetables of sorts and opium. They keep cattle, goats and a few ponies. The women are much occupied with weaving and embroidery, the results of their labour being often of artistic value. The Meao are monogamists and their marriages, which are usually preceded by a period of irregular co-habitation, are accompanied by elaborate ceremonies. Their religion is the usual spirit-worship, observed by means of sacrifice, by heavy eating and by the copious drinking of rough, strong spirit distilled from rice. They practise burial of the dead, and their custom of placing a white cock beside the corpse to do battle with the great lizard supposed to bar the passage of the soul to paradise may possibly denote some remote connection with the Chinbok tribes far away to the west, on the other side of Burma. The Meao say they once had a written character but have lost it. They now use the Chinese, in which a small proportion of their men are proficient. They also use the Chinese calendar. There appears no reason to warrant affiliation of the Meao with the races of Môn-Annam stock, while language, customs and, to some extent, appearance, seem to hint at connection with the Tibeto-Burman races. They are therefore now included among the latter, though subsequent investigation may possibly prove such classification quite wrong.

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